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Function Of CIA Rates A Review

THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY, an organization whose function is highly essential to the nation, has come the center of great controversy as its part in the debacle that was the attempted invasion of Cuba becomes better known.

The agency was created in 1947 in an attempt to unify the various efforts of the government in obtaining and evaluating information as to the plans and intentions of foreign nations, especially the Iron Curtain countries.

To put it in other words, although somewhat less eloquent ones, the CIA was to be the master spy outfit; the agency which would collect, by one means or another, highly essential information, evaluate it and pass it along to the proper officials.

Spying, espionage, whatever else one may wish to call it, is a questionable business. It has long been engaged in by the nations of the world. Undoubtedly, they will continue to engage in it during the foreseeable future.

One may wish for a situation in which agencies such as the CIA would not be necessary. But the realities of the world make it necessary. And so the United States, engaged in a cold war with its own survival at stake, set up the CIA. It is very much a hush-hush operation. Even the appropriations for its activities are "hidden" to a large extent among those of other governmental departments.

Due to the nature of its work, the CIA is not accountable to much of anyone other than the National Security Council and the President of the United States. Obviously, it spends many millions of dollars. For it has, in Washington alone, nearly 10,000 employees. How many it has abroad is known only to a few persons.

SPYING IN THE CLOAK-AND-DAGGER TRADITION is by no means the only type of work in which the CIA is engaged. That is only one facet of an organization of its kind. It checks newspapers, magazines, speeches, radio broadcasts, and a host of other communication media from and in almost every country in the world. By so doing, it is able, or is supposed to be able, to chart trends and forecast the future. It has many methods and techniques, most of them more scientific than those usually associated with cloak and dagger and other operations of a melodramatic connotation.

Few persons challenge the need for such an organization. The United States, engaged in a cold war with a ruthless and determined enemy, must know what is going on behind the Iron Curtain, must know the plans and the activities of those who would destroy it.

Since 1947 the CIA has undoubtedly been of great service to this nation, both under Gen. Walter Bedell Smith, its first director, and under Allen W. Dulles, who succeeded him.

The CIA is now under attack such as it has not had to meet since its inception. It had a hand, a major hand, in the fiasco that was the Bay of Pigs. It was a misdirected country - just Cuba but a short distance

IT IS LIKELY THE CIA PLANNED THIS ONE in a tragic manner. It was not alone in the responsibility. However, as a consequence of its Cuban failure, the CIA is becoming better known to the American people.

Most people grant the necessity for a widespread operation in the collection and evaluation of intelligence from all parts of the world. Most people are willing to concede that, in such efforts, tactics and techniques of an unusual nature are sometimes necessary.

The CIA, however, may have enlarged its scope far beyond that of collecting and evaluating information. That is difficult to ascertain. Indications arising from the abortive seem to foster such conclusions. There are some indications that the CIA, as a consequence of its freedom of operation, has extended its role into areas beyond those contemplated.

If so, President Kennedy, who has now ordered an investigation of the CIA, should return our "master spy" organization to its original functions. The very nature of the CIA is such that it could easily get out of hand, become a government within a government and supersede, in some cases, our elected representatives it was created to serve.

As the furor over the CIA mounts, it is well to recall the necessity for the collection and evaluation of information as to the plans and activities of the enemy. Simultaneously, it can be hoped that those organizations to whom the CIA is accountable will insist that the CIA limits itself to the essential functions for which it was originally created.

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